



On Wings of Faith

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Marlene says

"On the Wings of Faith" is one of the most insightful and thoughtful accounts of how President Ezra Taft Benson and other LDS church leaders were able to breach the seemingly impossible challenges of government red-tape, lack of transportation, language barriers, distrust among nations and peoples, and physical exhaustion to do the great charitable work of bringing aid to the ravished countries in Europe after World War II. Frank Babbel, the author shares insights from his journal about how the Lord opened the way for them to be places and do things that they were told time and time again were impossible. This is a great testimony-building book that I would recommend to anyone.

Amanda says

I am so glad that this was the pick for my book club this month. Otherwise, this little book probably would never have ended up on my radar. It was put together long after the fact, pieced from Elder Babbel's journals and other recordings, so there is some lack of flow and cohesion. However, the accounts he shares are miraculous and inspiring. I haven't ever read a book that talks about the problems still faced by the people in Europe when WWII ended. It was very sobering, but incredible to read about the hope and faith the Saints in Europe continued to cling to, even after all they were forced to endure.

Gillian Scandurra says

Loved reading about the experiences of Frederick Babbel and Ezra Taft Benson during their 12 month service mission throughout Europe during post WW2; and to gain a tiny glimpse of the continuing devastation of war post ceasefire. Their service, sacrifice, dedication, inspiration and faith are inspiring.

Margaret says

I love this book! It is the story of Ezra Taft Benson's trip to Europe after WWII to visit and buoy up the saints and to regulate the affairs of the church. There are so many inspirational antecdotes. In the preface, the author says, "No one could live as the participants did during those eventful days, without knowing through the revelations of the Almighty that he lives, that he is all-powerful, that he blesses and sustains his servants. The age of miracles is not past! It is always present for those who live, believe, and obey." I would highly recommend this book to anyone.

Carolyn C. says

On Wings of Faith was our Book Group selection for this month. To tell the truth it was a slow start for me...however, once I got into the "writer's" (he's not really an "author") style I really enjoyed it! You just

have to keep in mind that the book is written much like a journal (because it pretty much is) and a little disconnected at times. Once I accepted this then I got very engrossed in the amazing accounts of faith and divine intervention experienced by Ezra Taft Benson and Frederick Babbel (time after time) as they traveled through war torn Europe to check on the condition members of the LDS church immediately following WWII.

I've read a few books written about the time "during" WWII but this was the first about the period following right after...can I just say it was heartbreaking!! I had no idea starvation was so prevalent and how many people perished from starvation, mal-nutrition or freezing to death during the winter months. Did I mention heartbreaking?? Also how creully people were treated:(Unbelievable!!

I was also surprised to learn how many times President Benson and Frederick Babbel escaped close encounters with death themselves. WOW!! How grateful we should all be for what we have and ALSO that F. Babbel kept such copious notes!!

Very interesting book:)

Billie says

After seeing "Saints and Soldiers" and reading Hughes Children of the Promise, where this book was referenced many many times, I decided it was time to pick this book up.

It was a wedding gift, signed by Babbel himself (friend of the family) and had been sitting on our "reference" shelf for many years.

Little did I know what great insights, history, love, faith, pain, etc. was included in it.

A MUST read if you have read any of the previous mentioned books. It will pull everything together for you.

Michelle says

This was a great book about post-WWII in Europe, mostly in Germany. It is taken from the author's journal, so the book reads like a journal in parts and not a polished writing style, which carries its own freshness. I was saddened by the many struggles of the people after the War and grateful for those who stepped in to help what little bit they could. I was uplifted by the many miracles that took place to help that aid.

Lisa says

This was such an inspiring book. Detailed with unbelievable stories about how partnered with President (then an apostle) Ezra Taft Benson, Babble overcame the impossible in reaching the war-torn saints following World War II. They saved countless lives with persistence in reaching them when told by authorities they wouldn't be able to do so. The famous story of the woman stripped of her family members one by one, who succumbed to death and burying each with a teaspoon is a captivating story related to Babbel. This is testament of the recurring statement found in the Doctrine In Covenants "And they shall go forth, and none shall stay them, for I the Lord hath commanded them."

KatieSuzanne says

Recommended to me by an old war vet. The writing isn't great but the story is important. It's a recorded account of the travels of Ezra T Benson and his secretary as they traveled through restricted and often closed off parts of Europe and Scandinavia immediately after WWII. Often times they were the first relief efforts allowed in to areas, some still full of soldiers. Lots of little clips of faith during war, miracles allowing access and a lot of eye opening descriptions of civilians during the war. Each one could be a book on its own but, like their trips, it's a quick pass through as many places as possible.

Heather says

Frederick Babbel served as the secretary of the European Mission during 1946 when Elder Ezra Taft Benson served as the mission president just after World War II. They went to serve the people after the war, offer relief, and strengthen the saints. This book and record is full of miracles and faith and hope after a very difficult time. I enjoyed reading of these faithful examples and stories. Here are a few quotes I liked:

"Several long-distance phone calls by Elder Benson got us two reservations on an allegedly full train from North Platte to Chicago plus two seats on the first plane out of that city--despite the overburdened passenger lists caused by the snow blanketing the area (p. 6)."

"And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them' (D&C 1:5) (p. 6)."

"An attractive placard by the Christus, printed in several languages, read: 'If you would behold the master's art, then bend your knees and look up.' As one kneels, a beautiful transformation seems to take place. The statue fairly seems to breathe.... Tears seem to glisten in the Savior's eyes (p. 12)."

"To all appearances, I had entered Belgium illegally, since my passport and visa had not been stamped when I entered the country (p. 30)."

"The general condition of the Saints is improving daily. Spiritually it has been good throughout the war and was perhaps never better than it is now. Mission leaders everywhere report that in their experience the Saints have never so completely lived the law of tithing and kept the Word of Wisdom and otherwise maintained the standards of the Church. While the Saints have been called upon to endure hardships almost beyond description, in many cases, yet they have remained hopeful and optimistic, even during occupation of their countries by a foreign enemy when at times they feared for their very lives (Ezra Taft Benson, p. 24)."

"What a glorious demonstration of the power of the Lord! A few days previously, all of these developments were considered to be impossibilities, humanly speaking. Today they had become realities (p. 31)."

"As we traveled through Switzerland, we spent many pleasant hours in conversation and in singing together. Brother Badger sang bass, President Benson sang the melody, and I provided suitable harmony. President Benson did most of the driving (p. 31)."

"The destruction at Dieppe and Liege did not begin to compare in fury with the desolation that greeted us in

city after city in Germany (p. 33)."

"As I look into your tear-stained eyes and see many of you virtually in rags and at death's door, yet with a smile upon your cracked lips and the light of love and understanding shining in your eyes, I know that you have been true to your covenants, that you have been clean, that you have not permitted hatred and bitterness to fill your hearts. You—many of you—are some of the Lord's choicest witnesses of the fruits of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Ezra Taft Benson, p. 35)."

"Any man or woman who has a testimony of this work has no fear for the future. Come what may, they will look up and forward. We need the gospel of Jesus Christ in this world. We have it and through us it can be given to others to bless them. Be united. Be prayerful. Love on another (Ezra Taft Benson, p. 37)."

"Mr. Benson, there's something about you that I like. I want to help you in every way that I can!" I could not help but recall the promise made to President Benson in his letter of appointment. At that time the First Presidency wrote: "...Your influence [will] be felt for good by all you come in contact with, and...you and they [will] be made to feel that there is a power and spirit accompanying you not of man." As President Benson explained the nature of our mission and the organization of the Church and its welfare program, General McNarney exclaimed, 'Mr. Benson, I have never heard of a church with such vision (p. 43)!'"

"When President Benson informed him that we had ninety large welfare storehouses bulging with food and clothing, which could be ready for shipment within twenty-four hours, one could fairly feel the general's astonishment. He then agreed to give us written authorization to make our own distribution through our own channels. In exchange, we agreed to provide a reasonable amount of our foodstuffs for use in the existing child-feeding program. After this point was reached, General McNarney seemed willing to consider favorably our every request (p. 44)."

"It was but another evidence of how the Lord prepared the way before us to achieve his purposes (p. 46)."

"At that time the official daily food ration in the French Zone of occupation was 400 to 500 calories. One group of saints living there had been unable for several weeks to obtain any kind of bread to use as one of the sacramental emblems. They were so anxious to partake of the sacrament that they purchased some potato peelings which cost fifty dollars and used those in place of bread (p. 46)."

"During the war years some of our saints...were scarred or maimed for life. Our mission secretary, Sister Ilse Bruenger Foerster...had to bear the brunt of brutal Gestapo investigations and several merciless beatings.... Charges were leveled that she was ending mission funds to America. After two weeks of grueling interrogations, beatings, and constant surveillance, during which time many mission records were confiscated and some of them destroyed, she was released with the threat that not only her own life but the lives of members of her family and relatives would stand in jeopardy if she ever revealed the nature of her questioning. During this critical time she was expecting her first child, but in spite of such threats and the terrific strain imposed upon her, she successfully denied every false charge and refuted every accusation. Her accusers marveled at her intense faith and her devotion to the Church. When questioned about how she was able to bear up under these trials, she answered simply that she had always placed her complete trust in the Lord and that he had always sustained her through every circumstance (p. 46)."

"We observed that, during and after the meeting, not a single member registered any complaint about his circumstances in spite of the fact that some were obviously in the last stages of starvation. In Berlin alone, we were told the pervading attitude of hopelessness caused over a hundred suicides daily. Our saints, on the other hand, were full of hope, courage, and faith. Everywhere we met with them they reflected a quiet

optimism and a spirit of gratitude for the Church and the gospel of Jesus Christ (p. 60). ”

“I’m not a member of your Church, but I’ve been going to your Sunday School where our teacher told us that you can bless people and make them as well as Jesus did. I want you to make me well!” It was a sobering request, but we blessed him that according to his faith he should be spared. Now, seven years later he stood before me, a priest in our Church, healthy and well. He had served briefly in the German army. Meeting him and Brother Rosner that might was a wonderful climax to a most inspirational meeting with the Viennese saints (p. 69).”

“As we entered Stuttgart we were impressed that though the damage was heavy, it did not appear to be as extensive as in several of the larger cities we had visited (p. 70).”

“After the meeting, President Benson mentioned how appreciative he had been for the brief personal letters he received from time to time from President George Albert Smith. Usually President Smith wrote along the lines: ‘I attended sacrament meeting in our home ward [Yale Ward] this afternoon and was pleased to see Sister Benson and her six lovely children all seated together on the front row. All is well!’ President Benson regarded this attribute of genuine love and concern as one of the most endearing marks of greatness of that beloved prophet (p. 72).”

“Then an unusual request was made of these people. As they were assembled together in a mission-wide conference at Rotterdam to give thanks for the abundant harvest, their mission president, Cornelius Zappéy, said: ‘Some of the most bitter enemies you people have encountered as a result of this war are the German people. We know what intense feelings of dislike you have for them. But those people are now much worse off than you are and we are asking you to send your entire potato harvest to the German saints. Will you do it?’ They did it (p. 73).”

“We were so busy making history that we just couldn’t find the time needed to write about it (Ezra Taft Benson, p. 75).”

“Never has so much been accomplished so quickly by so few”—except that we were but instruments and witnesses of the power and purpose of our Lord who is at the helm (p. 75).”

“Rearing 11 vigorous children to honorable manhood and womanhood on a small farm is no easy accomplishment. Yet, as my father and mother devoted themselves to this task, they never seemed to have any fear of the future. The reason was their faith—their confidence that they could always go to the Lord and He would see them through.... It is soul-satisfying to know that God is mindful of us and ready to respond when we place our trust in Him and do that which is right. There is no place for fear among men and women who place their trust in the Almighty, who do not hesitate to humble themselves in seeking divine guidance through prayer (Ezra Taft Benson, p. 83).”

“When President Peterson and his missionaries arrived in Norway they were given permission to remain only sixty days. They appealed for extensions. One was granted. Finally they were notified rather forcibly that no further extensions would be granted. Their only recourse was fasting and prayer (p. 89).”

“For some time it had become increasingly evident that the weight of President Benson’s responsibilities was causing him frequent sleeplessness.... From my observation he not only talked matters over with the Lord, but the Lord was not unmindful of him and was pleased to reveal to him things beyond the normal comprehension of man. After each such experience he appeared to gain new strength and insight (p. 97).”

“These queues are dreadful. The time that is wasted, if put to good use, could rebuild the entire British Isles within a year at not one penny expense for labor (p. 100).”

“Well, if you’re that kind of people and will do what you say...I’ll grant you permission to enter Germany. And I wish you luck with your mission (p. 104).”

“Man’s inhumanity to man was a most appalling thing to behold (p. 117).”

“I must repeat again and again that the Lord knew what he was doing when he sent President Benson over here. He is a living apostle of God in every way.... I continue to marvel at his unwavering faith, his unflinching courage, his resolute determination and undaunted spirit.... He not only speaks to God, but he listens, and I’m sure God speaks with him even as he did with his apostles of old. He is a truly great servant of God—one of the humblest, most devoted men I have ever known, so kind in spirit and manner, so without guile, a man surpassing all men I have known...in his deep heartfelt love for the saints of God. It is a real inspiration just to be around him and see how he works (p. 121).”

“President Benson met me at the door and inquired anxiously whether I had been able to get the needed permission. When I said no, he was noticeably disappointed. I sensed deeply with him that we were faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem. After a few moments of soulsearching reflection, during which neither one of us broke the silence, he said quietly but firmly, ‘Let me pray about it (p. 130).’”

“Within ten minutes after our arrival at the headquarters, President Benson had secured the necessary clearances for all three of us. In spite of all the warnings both in London and Berlin that such a thing was absolutely impossible, the impossible had taken place. Again the Lord’s promise had been vindicated, ‘And they shall go forth and none shall stay them, for I the Lord have commanded them (p. 132).’”

“Mr. Benson, don’t you realize that we’ve just been through a disastrous war? Transportation in Poland is almost non-existent. I’ve been here over a month now, and so far I haven’t even been able to get a jeep to take me beyond the city limits of Warsaw (p. 134).”

“Most of the people boarding the train appeared to be hauling all of their earthly possessions with them. Many of them probably were refugees (a commonplace sight throughout the occupied areas) (p. 136).”

“President Benson reminded them that it was Fast Sunday and that we should therefore forego eating. Our Polish driver was quite unhappy over this verdict, but he and Brother Gasser did not realize that neither President Benson nor I had eaten a meal since Wednesday (p. 143).”

“President Benson received a telegram from the First Presidency asking us to postpone indefinitely our scheduled trip to Palestine and South Africa.... We had spent many hours during the past four months in securing permissions.... and now we had to undo it (p. 151).”

“As I placed my hands on your son’s head, I was assured that he might be healed this very night and be restored to you whole if you will only lose the hatred which you have in your hearts (p. 156).”

“Five or six weeks before President Benson expected to return to his home in Salt Lake City, he wrote a special fare well message and testimony for inclusion in the various mission publications. As I typed it I recognized it as one of the most stirring and inspirational documents I had read in a long time, reminiscent of earlier Church leaders in its forthright spirit, its boldness, and its unbounded love and humility. It came from the depths of a heart overflowing with the pure love of God and a testimony tested and found to be

valiant (p. 158)."

"From the time [President Benson] left Salt Lake City on January 29, 1946, until he arrived back there on December 13, 1946.

By plane - 32,202

By ship and boat - 1,455

Miscellaneous - 3,405

By train - 9,818

By automobile - 14,356

Total miles - 61,236 (p. 163)."

"This emergency mission to which President Benson had been called the previous January had resulted in significant accomplishments. Mission presidents were now directing the work in all the mission of Europe except the West German Mission.... Welfare supplies were moving in orderly fashion and had reached our needy saints in almost all the countries of war-torn Europe. Missionaries were busily engaged in teaching the restored gospel in all of the prewar missions of Europe (p. 163)."

"On March 14, 1947, President Sonne dictated to Elder Bennett an inclusion for the official European Mission History as follows: 'Elder Frederick W. Babbel, secretary of the European Mission since January 29, 1946, when he and Elder Ezra Taft Benson of the Council of the Twelve left Salt Lake City for London [will depart] for his home via Pan American Clipper with the good wishes of hosts of friends he has made throughout Britain and Europe through his cheerful, unswerving devotion to the Church. Not a little of the success which attended the efforts of Elder Benson when he was president of the European Mission was due to Elder Babbel's assistance (p. 177).'"

"He discovered that I had calcified spots on both lungs—an indication of my having contracted tuberculosis. I explained that before he prescribed any kind of treatment, I was going to take a few days to claim the blessing President Sonne had given me before I left Europe.... My lungs were entirely free of all spots, with no evidence remaining of tuberculosis infection. To this day I enjoy excellent health (p. 179)."

"As I neared the end of my mission I had much to reflect on, particularly as regards the magnificent examples of faith and courage I had observed among the European saints. One of the sweetest testimonies that grew out of the total experience was that declared by the devoted men who served as mission presidents during the war years.... 'Brother Benson,' they said, in effect, 'no one can convince us that this is not the Church of Jesus Christ, because during the war years he was the only One to whom we could turn, and he never once let us down (p. 179)!'"

"I sometimes feel that we, as Latter-day Saints, don't realize the tremendous power that has been given to us as God's children. This is not only the power by which the worlds were created but even more important, the power to change men and women and make them gods and goddesses! That's not blasphemy. That's the simple truth. And there's no greater power in all the earth than that which can transform men and women and conform them literally to the image of their Divine Father (p. 181)."

Angie says

This book is basically the author's journal from his time spent as the aide to one of the LDS Twelve Apostles during the immediate aftermath of WWII in Europe. Babbel and Ezra Benson were, in many cases, some of

the very first civilians allowed into the occupied zones of Germany, Austria, and Poland. Their mission was to track down members of the LDS church living amongst the rubble and ruins, starving, and homeless, and distribute food and clothing. Many of the LDS members they were able to reach in miraculous ways, even locating a bedraggled group of German LDS members on the outskirts of Poland who had been beaten, killed, gang-raped, and stripped of all their belongings. It is an uplifting book that left me wanting to know the ends to the stories of the people they found and rescued from starvation and hopelessness.

Jessica says

3.5 stars

The editing on this book is quite poor (there is even a note warning the reader about potentially bad grammar and punctuation in the introduction).

However, the content is good. It made my heart ache to read what atrocities, deprivations, and privations many citizens of Europe endured during WWII—but the testimonies and stories and miracles that so many saints experienced is awe inspiring. The miracles are, perhaps, innumerable. It is obvious the Lord's hand was present in the lives of His faithful saints (and so, so many others) and reading those stories makes me even more grateful for a loving Heavenly Father.

Brenda says

Normally I steer away from LDS books but this non-fiction account of Ezra Taft Benson's travels through post-war Europe was recommended to me and I now recommend it to you. Frederick Babbel served as secretary to then-apostle Ezra T. Benson and journaled their travels and experiences on their assignment to assess and bring relief to the saints in Europe. What was most interesting to me were the hardships faced by both allied and axis countries and the faith of the saints on both sides of the conflict. It was a story I hadn't heard before.

HT Goodwill says

This book is centered around the efforts of Elder Ezra Taft Benson (as told by his mission secretary, Elder Babbel) to begin the LDS church's relief efforts in Europe and Scandinavia. Told in a rather dry, matter-of-fact style, this book focuses on the hardships endured and blessings received by the European people, and the miraculous paths that were opened up to the Elders as they struggled to bring relief to the people. It doesn't focus on the relief efforts -- those are in the background.

One of the most revealing and saddest parts of the book were the eye-witness accounts of the cruelty exhibited by the victorious soldiers towards the civilians of the conquered Germans. The brutalities were just as horrific as those we hear about in today's news from war-torn countries. Luckily, these accounts are told in the same dry, matter-of-fact style rather than in a gratuitous style. This makes it a bit easier to read - but it also makes it more real -- the author isn't trying to hook you, or intrigue you by arousing your morbid

curiosities. He was genuinely appalled at the scenes he witnessed and you are left with the same feeling.

Thankfully, most of the book deals with the miraculous and up-lifting experiences centered around helping other, survival in the face of extreme adversity -- and not just survival, but survival with ones principles intact. That people lived through such harsh times while maintaining their trust and their self-discipline and their charitable character is a true testament to their deep faith in a loving God and the power that it brings.

Marilyn says

Babbel is NOT a good author, but an informative journal writer. This book reads more like a journal or travelogue, so it is redundant at times. However, I gave it 4 stars because it is filled with fascinating, enlightening information about Babbel's mission with Ezra Taft Benson to find the saints in Europe after World War II. They found and strengthened the saints, organized the local leadership, and helped welfare shipments reach the starving, destitute people in war-torn Europe. There are experiences that will break your heart as you learn more about man's inhumanity to man, but will also strengthen your testimony as you read of man's service to man and read of the strength of the Saints as they remained firm and steadfast in following Jesus Christ. You will read of miracles that happened in the aftermath of the war that will deeply touch your heart and strengthen your testimony of our Savior's love for all.
